



Special Operations Response Team (SORT)



WHAT IS SORT?

SORT stands for Special Operations Response Team. The team consists of ambulance nurses and drivers who work at Ambulance Amsterdam in the regions Amsterdam-Amstelland and Zaanstreek-Waterland.

The SORT is deployed in incidents involving extreme violence, where the situation is not safe and/or the safety is still unclear. Examples include attacks, demonstrations, and riots.

The SORT was established in 2016 following the terrorist attacks in Brussels and Paris and the increased terrorist threat in Europe. During the same period, all ambulance services were assigned the task previously held by the GHOR (Medical Assistance Organization in the Region) to provide large-scale medical assistance. Our SORT was created to meet the demands of both situations.



WHAT DOES THE SORT DO?

The SORT is mostly used during large-scale incidents, extreme violence, and disruption of public order and safety with the potential for casualties. These incidents are too risky for unprotected ambulance teams to enter.

Additionally, the SORT is always present during planned events such as Holocaust commemoration, King's Day, Gay Pride, the Dam to Dam Run, and the Amsterdam Marathon.

EXTREME VIOLENCE

The terrorism threat level in the Netherlands has been 'substantial' for several years. This means that a terrorist attack in our country is conceivable. Therefore, we need to be prepared for extreme violence that could result in lots of casualties.

Moreover, Amsterdam and its surrounding areas have a violent street culture, and there are numerous large-scale events and demonstrations. Small acts of violence have the potential to escalate into larger disturbances of public order with many people injured.

To address these challenges, the SORT closely collaborates with the police and the fire department in Amsterdam.

The Amsterdam model for responding to violent situations is currently unique in the Netherlands. We are the only region where the fire department, police and ambulance can (together with specialized teams) operate in the warm zone.





VEHICLES

The SORT uses various vehicles for its operations.

During a large-scale events, we use the calamity vehicle, which can accommodate 6 SORT members. This vehicle is specially equipped with the necessary resources for such deployments. However, it is not suitable for transporting patients.

Additionally, we have a Rapid Responder vehicle, which 2 SORT members can use. Similarly, this vehicle cannot transport patients. Deployments with this vehicle partly take place during regular shifts (of a Rapid Responder) and during events where many interventions without transportation are expected, such as King's Day or the Canal Pride.

During regular shifts, we use a standard Advanced Life Support ambulance. Extra equipment is added to this vehicle so that it can also respond directly and swiftly to incidents involving extreme violence.

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

The trained SORT members operate in the so-called “warm zone” under the protection of the police. Working in this warm zone requires specific safety measures for SORT members. Therefore, we are equipped with individually fitted bulletproof vests. Additionally, we wear helmets, eye and hearing protection, and have access to various communication devices.

The appearance of SORT clothing has been determined in collaboration with the police. The key principle was to ensure that a SORT member is visibly prepared for their role as a healthcare provider in exceptional circumstances.



EDUCATION & TRAINING

The basic training for a SORT member used to take place in England. During this training, a SORT member was not only trained to become an expert in providing assistance during extreme violence but also learned how to operate in challenging conditions where leadership and coordination are crucial.

Over the years, we have gained a significant amount of expertise in education and training. As a result, we now provide the basic training for SORT members ourselves from Ambulance Amsterdam.

In addition, the SORT regularly trains to be well-prepared for deployments. We often train in collaboration with the police and the fire department.



We regularly participate in the training sessions of the local police department teams. The final exercise often takes place at a public locations, such as a museums or event venue. During these exercises, the locations also practice their own evacuation procedures. This approach allows us to strengthen our collaboration during extreme incidents.



ALERTING

SORT members are available 24/7. Requests for a deployment are made through the Amsterdam-Amstelland emergency control room. In the case of a large-scale incident, the SORT is notified with code 10, ensuring that additional assistance can be quickly provided if needed.

The SORT functions as a calamity team in the Amsterdam-Amstelland and Zaanstreek-Waterland regions. There are plans to potentially expand the deployment to other regions in the coming years. If you would like more information about this expansion, please contact us, and we will assess the requirements and possibilities for deploying the SORT in a cross-regional capacity.

MORE INFO

If you have any questions about the SORT, please feel free to contact us.



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Ambulance Amsterdam
zorg met hoofd en hart